

House Dust Mite Control

House dust mites are insects so small that they can only be seen with a microscope. They use dead human skin cells (dander) as food. Dust mites are not a problem for most people, however some people are allergic to them.

If you are allergic to dust mites you should control the number in your home. This helps prevent symptoms (congestion, sneezing, watery eyes). Bedding and bedroom carpeting are very good sources of dead human skin cells. These areas have many mites. The bedroom is where you should try the hardest to keep mite levels down.

Cover your mouth with a mask or a handkerchief when you clean. Leave the room after you have finished cleaning it.

Here are things you can do to help control mite levels in your home:

- Dust at least once a week using a mop with furniture polish/oil on it or a damp rag.
- Keep only things you need in closets and keep closet doors closed.
- Keep windows closed as much as possible. Use window coverings that are easy to clean, such as washable drapes and shades.
- Do not keep a lot of books and papers around.
- Hardwood, tile, or linoleum floors are best for people with allergies.
- Make a "room level" filter by covering the furnace/heat wall outlets with a "furnace filter" cut to fit behind the outlet. You can buy these filters at most hardware stores. The filter lets heat through but holds dust back. Wash filters once a week. It is very important to do this in your dust-free room.
- You should have a "dust-free" room. The bedroom is usually chosen. The dust-free room should have only a few pieces of furniture, no carpets, curtains that can be washed in hot water, or no window coverings. First clean the room completely. Clean walls, woodwork, closets, and ceilings. Waxing the floor helps hold dust down. Clean your dust-free room every day or at least twice a week. Use a vacuum cleaner, a mop with furniture polish/oil on it, or a damp cloth. Avoid using a broom or a duster.
- Cover your mattress, box spring, and pillows with airtight zippered plastic or special allergen proof fabric covers.

- Wood, metal, or plastic furniture is best. Avoid sitting on stuffed furniture.
(over)
- Wash bed linens once a week in hot water (130 degrees) and dry in a hot dryer.
- Do not keep a humidifier in your bedroom. Mites need a humid spot. They die if humidity is less than 50%. The humidity inside a heated house (in Minnesota) is usually below 50%, unless a humidifier is used.

If you have any questions please call 3D - Allergy Clinic at (612) 725-2288 and ask to speak to one of the allergy nurses.

Author: Mary Dahlheimer, RN

Content approval: Allergy Clinic

March 1993

Reviewed February 1996, May 1998, July 2000, August 2002, November 2005

VA Medical Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota